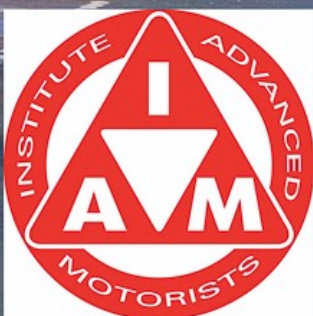
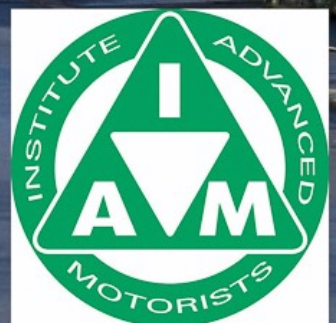


The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



May 2018





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The Newsletter of the North Down Advanced Motorists Group (Group 8199)

Helping to Improve the Standard of Driving and Riding on the Roads in Northern Ireland and the advancement of road safety

May 2018

<http://www.amni.org.uk/>

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Test passes

Congratulations this month to car member

Kevin Dellar

and also to

Annie McFarland

who passed her car test a few years ago, did a retest and was awarded a F1RST

Good luck and safe driving and riding to any Associates approaching their test

Cover picture

The April cover picture was Botanic Avenue in Belfast taken from Shaftesbury Square. Congratulations to Shaun McKittrick (on a roll), Norman Shearer, William McAteer and Guy Thomson.

Do you recognise the location of this month's cover? It should be an easy one. No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the Road Observer.

Dates for your Diary

22 May - STAC 7 - Motorways and dual carriageways

29 May - No meeting

5 June - STAC 8 - Manoeuvring

12 June - Group Night - a driving event: details to be announced

26 June - Additional driving practice

STAC - Short Term Associate Course. Associate Members should ensure that are familiar with the relevant section of the "Associate Handbook" before each STAC night so that you can get the most benefit from the theory session as well as your observed drive.

Car care

On our May Group night we welcomed Mark Sloane from Polished Pursuits to talk to us about caring for your car. Mark runs a car detailing business near Ballyclare and is the recognised detailer for Porsche Club GB Region 27 (NI) and Mercedes Benz Owners Club (NI).

What is car detailing? Mark explained that it's all about bringing your car back to showroom condition. Although he runs a detailing business his talk was to educate and motivate us by demonstrating how to take good care of our cars ourselves. He brought with him a large selection of cleaning/polishing products, brushes, cloths, buckets etc

Why is it important to take care of your car? Mark listed a number of reasons:

- Maintains/improves the car's resale value.
- Good techniques helps reduce swirls & scratches
- Can prevent future rust issues.
- Regular waxing will prevent paint fade especially red
- Easier to clean if it is washed more often.
- 1.2% increase in MPG (scientifically researched number)



To enable him to assess the level of interest/skills amongst members he began by posing some questions including

- how often do you wash your car?
- do you use a sponge?
- do you use one or more buckets?

There was equal embarrassment from opposite ends of the spectrum - those who rarely bother to wash their car and the obsessives who wash and polish regularly.

Some basic key points for washing your car:

- Don't use a sponge. It holds dirt and grit and contributes to swirl marks on the paint surface. Use a microfibre wash mitt.
- Don't use one bucket - use two - one for wash containing your chosen car shampoo/cleaner and one to rinse the wash mitt. Both buckets should contain grit guards so that the dirt and grit are not transferred to the wash mitt.

- Keep a separate wash mitt for the wheels, mud-flaps, sills, door shuts etc and a selection of brushes to clean the inside of the wheels.
- Don't wash the car in direct sunlight
- Don't use hot water in winter (it can remove the protective wax)
- Don't use heavy pressure to remove stubborn dirt - wash it a second time.
- Wash from the top down
- Use a microfibre drying towel rather than a chamois

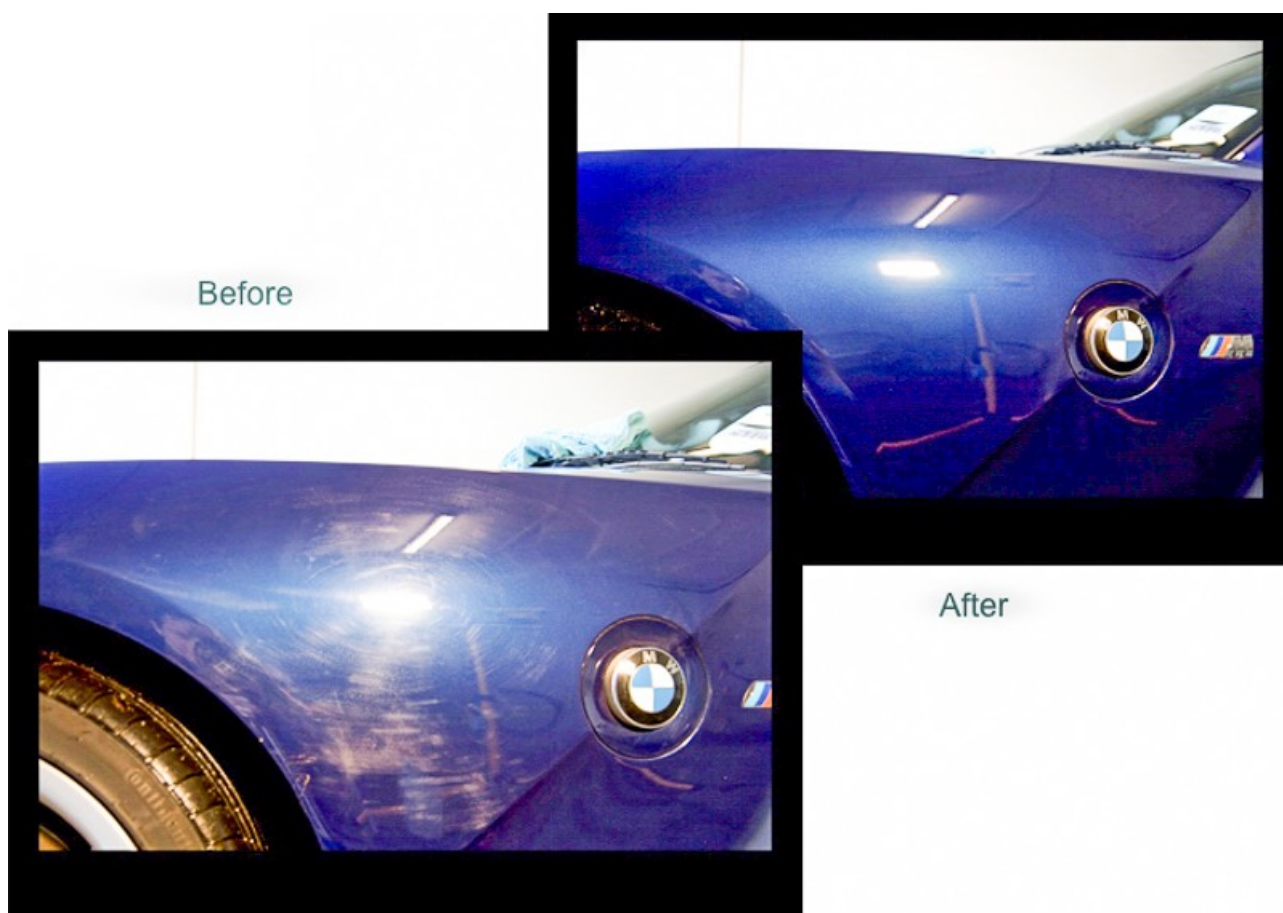


Grit
Guards

Mark recommends washing off bird droppings as soon as possible to prevent damage to the paint. For tar spots he recommends using a clay bar.

So how to protect the look now that the car is clean. There are two options and both have advantages and disadvantages. Wax is easy to apply but it needs to be re-applied every 2-3 months and it has limited chemical resistance. Ceramic coating is more expensive than wax, is more difficult to apply and you can't touch up stone chips. However, it is low maintenance after application, has better UV protection, is chemical resistant (bird droppings, tree sap) and should provide 2 years scratch and swirl protection.

On the subject of swirls Mark showed photographs of cars with parts of a panel covered in swirls alongside a section where he had machine polished them out - see below. However it's better to have good washing and polishing techniques to avoid swirls rather than to have to take steps to avoid them.



We finished off with a question and answer session and if it hadn't been for the 10pm deadline to leave the Boathouse we might have been there for another hour. In fact the chat with Mark continued into the carpark.

It was an entertaining and informative night and much of this was down to Mark's easy going style of presentation. He has since been in contact to say how much he enjoyed the evening and that he appreciated the questions and comments from our Members.

It all comes down to how much you value the look of your car and how much effort you are prepared to put into keeping it looking good. Even if all you do is polish it a couple of times a year and wash it reasonably regularly, Mark's washing advice will help keep up its appearance.

Mark has provided a copy of his slides from the talk which include a list of his product recommendations. If you would like to see the presentation please email me and I will send it to you.

As one of his final slides he posted a picture of someone we know who knows a thing or two about car care:



Members are also welcome to email or ring Mark using the details below should they wish to know more information.

Website: <http://www.polishedpursuits.co.uk>

email: polishedpursuits@gmail.com

Phone: 07793 048200

IAM RoadSmart advice on dealing with punctures

Sometimes the roads we drive on can be unpredictable which can lead to a puncture. This could mean cancelling our plans and waiting in a safe place for the breakdown recovery team. But we could soon be on our way if we were able to change the tyre ourselves. Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, provides some useful advice on how to change a tyre.

- If it is possible, pull off the road to a safe area. If you have to stop on a road, place your warning triangle at least 45 metres



behind your vehicle, but not on a motorway. Activate your hazard warning lights to warn other traffic. Raising the bonnet or hatchback will help other traffic realise you have an issue. If you have a passenger, get them to act as spotter and warn you of approaching traffic

- A level hard standing will be best as soft ground will not allow the jack to be used correctly. If the ground is not suitable you may need assistance from a professional



- Locate the jack, wheel brace and the locknut. It may help if you do this during your weekly vehicle checks so you know where it is and how to release it. This is also a good time to locate the jacking points and find out how the jack works. Often the kit will have a wheel chock; use this on the other axle of the vehicle to assist keep it still.

- Loosen the wheel nuts slightly before you start jacking the car up, the vehicle will be unstable after you raise it and you will not be able to get as much leverage. Remember one of the nuts is likely to have a lock function and will require the unique key.

- When jacking the vehicle you will need it to be raised high enough to fit the new tyre (this will be higher than required to remove the old). Wear gloves when handling the old tyre, if it has punctured it is likely to have sharp steel protruding from it.
- Tighten the wheel nuts until the wheel sits squarely on the hub and then lower the jack. Further tighten the wheel nuts with the vehicle stable. You will need to get the wheel nuts checked for tightness by a professional (when you repair or replace the punctured tyre). If fitting a space saver spare, remember the restrictions that imposes i.e. no more than 50mph (80kph) and should be used to get you to a place of repair - not as a substitute for the correct tyre.
- Avoid changing your wheels on the hard shoulder of a motorway. If you have a puncture on a motorway, use the emergency phones to contact the motorway control room and they will send assistance to protect the area if required. Or arrange for your breakdown recovery organisation to assist you.

Richard said: "Punctures are much rarer these days but the risk associated with conducting a tyre change has increased with the volume of traffic. Safety has to be your main concern but if you cannot get to a safe area to make the change; get the vehicle off the road and call for assistance. A vehicle recovery service will have access to professional equipment which will allow a much speedier repair to be conducted. If you are in any doubt, call for help."

Reflections on a week's driving tour of Brittany

Unfortunately I was at the mercy of Hertz (other car rental companies are available) as to the actual vehicle in the class I had ordered. This time it was one of Citroen's latest offerings - a C3 Aircross with 9000km on the clock.

It's a relatively new offering from Citroen and throughout the trip I noticed it being given particular scrutiny by the locals. As a small diesel SUV or crossover it turned out to be reasonably competent and a comfortable ride over 1000km of French roads ranging from autoroutes at a steady 110kph to very narrow country roads and everything in between. The very narrow roads were often courtesy of the built in sat-nav which favoured the shortest route until I figured out what it was doing and reset it. In the villages and towns with their very narrow streets the small car was perfect. Thankfully it was

black thus avoiding the somewhat odd two colour combination models that Citroen currently offer.

Any downsides of the C3: yes - a gear lever that seemed to be connected to the gear box by an elastic band making selection a bit of a lottery until I got the hang of it and a 5th gear which was a long throw at arms length. Also, the steeply sloped A pillar sometimes gets in the way of visibility on left turns but then that's not uncommon with this style of car.



The biggest annoyance was the lane departure warning. Go anywhere near the centre line or the edge of the road to increase forward vision around corners and the thing beeps incessantly at you (and by near I mean within about a foot). As you would expect the lane departure warning doesn't sound if you signal your intention to cross a white line but it's very annoying if, as an advanced driver, you don't signal because there is no-one to benefit from it. However, a perusal of the handbook (in French - way above my standard) revealed that it could be switched off by pressing (for at least 3 seconds) a switch fairly well hidden below and to the left of the steering wheel. Joy was short-lived. Alas, the default position is "on" so there was the ritual of switching it off every time the engine was started.

I won't be buying one but for a week scooting about North-west France it was fine.

What is it about French rural roads? How do they maintain them so well? The surface varies from good to billiard table smooth. Road signage is good with road numbers prominently displayed. Simply put, they are a joy to drive on (apart from the rash of roundabouts - estimated to be around 32,000 compared to 25,000 in the UK).

And finally.....elderly motorhome French style (Renault Voyager) - a bit more than a polish needed.



The views expressed in the "Road Observer" are not necessarily those of the Editor, the North Down Advanced Motorists Group or the Institute of Advanced Motorists